



MAKING
A DIFFERENCE
IN GOVERNMENT...

General Information

GAO's Mission:

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

Nearly all of GAO's work is mandated in legislation or requested by committee leadership or individual members of appropriations, authorizing, budget, or oversight committees.

Core Values:

Three core values underlie GAO's work:

- **Accountability** describes the nature of GAO's work. GAO helps the Congress oversee federal programs and operations to ensure accountability to the American people. GAO's multidisciplinary staff of professionals seeks to enhance the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and credibility of the federal government both in fact and in the eyes of the American people. GAO accomplishes its mission through a variety of activities, including financial audits, program reviews, investigations, legal support and program analyses.
- **Integrity** describes the high standards that GAO sets for itself in the conduct of its work. GAO takes a professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced approach to all of its activities. Integrity is the foundation of reputation, and GAO's approach to its work ensures both.
- **Reliability** describes GAO's goal for how its work is viewed by the Congress and the American public. GAO produces high-quality reports, testimony, briefings, legal opinions, and other products and services that are timely, accurate, useful, clear and candid.

What GAO Does

GAO seeks to achieve honest, effective management and full accountability throughout the federal government. It serves the public interest by providing Members of Congress and others who make policy with accurate information, unbiased analyses, and objective recommendations on the use of public resources in support of the security and well-being of the American people. Each year the federal government realizes billions of dollars in savings as a result of GAO's work.

Who Is GAO

Most of GAO's staff works at headquarters in Washington, D.C. It is divided into five divisions where work is grouped by subject matter. GAO divisions are Accounting and Information Management; General Government; Health, Education, and Human Services; National Security and International Affairs; and Resources, Community, and Economic Development.

GAO also has offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Huntsville, Los Angeles, Norfolk, San Francisco, and Seattle. GAO reviews programs that are national in scope and uses teams of headquarters and field office staff to accomplish the work.

GAO typically hires professionals whose educational backgrounds generally include graduate or undergraduate degrees in public or business administration, economics, social sciences, computer science, and accounting. Among the major career tracks are GAO evaluator, financial auditor, computer-related specializations, and social science policy analysts.

How GAO Does Its Work

GAO goes wherever necessary, working in teams on-site at federal agencies, to analyze how federal programs and activities are implemented. To determine if these programs are being managed efficiently and effectively, GAO collects information, interviews program managers and staff, and tests and analyzes data.

GAO is at the forefront of program evaluation and audits and provides its staff with the tools that are needed to produce the kinds of important products you hear about on the nightly news. Access to major information databases, use of sophisticated statistical and other computer programs, and the ability to call on world-renowned experts for advice are among the many tools available.

Training is taken seriously at GAO. At least 80 hours of continuing professional education are required over each 2-year period. At GAO, continuing education is viewed as the means by which employees maintain their ability to meet the fast-paced challenges of GAO's mission.

Intensive training programs enable staff to handle a wide range of assignments and keep them up-to-date on technological changes and major public policy issues. Management training helps prepare employees for future advancement opportunities.

GAO Locations

Most of the work force is located in GAO's headquarters in Washington, D.C. The remainder of its work force is located in field offices across the United States.

Headquarters:

- Washington, D.C.

Field Offices:

- Atlanta
- Boston
- Chicago
- Dallas
- Dayton
- Denver
- Huntsville
- Los Angeles
- Norfolk
- San Francisco
- Seattle

Salary and Benefits

GAO's salary and benefits are comparable to those of other federal agencies. Most benefits generally match or exceed those in private industry.

Salary

Starting salaries are commensurate with education and experience. The base salary for entry level staff ranges from about \$29,000 to \$50,000 depending on an individual's qualifications and the location of the position.

Vacation

Annual leave (vacation) is based on length of government service, including any military service. For the first 3 years of government service, employees earn 13 days of vacation each year. For 4 to 15 years of federal service, employees earn 20 days of vacation each year, and after 15 years of federal service, employees earn 26 days of vacation each year. Thirty days may be carried over to the next year.

Sick Leave

Regardless of the length of service, employees earn 13 days of sick leave a year. The amount of sick leave that may be accumulated is not limited.

Other Leave

Provisions for paid and/or unpaid leave exist to take care of other absences for such reasons as maternity, military obligations, court attendance, and voting.

Holidays

GAO observes 10 legal holidays each year.

Health Benefits

GAO offers an excellent health insurance program. Under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, group hospitalization insurance is offered by a number of carriers. Each carrier provides for individual or family coverage. GAO pays a portion of the premium. No physical examination is required.

Life Insurance

Individuals accepting positions with the federal government are given an opportunity to select low-cost life insurance coverage. This coverage is based on annual salary and will include payments for loss of limbs and eyesight in addition to accidental death. There are various options available.

Retirement

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) offers excellent benefits financed through payroll deductions. FERS includes a Thrift Savings Plan, similar to 401(K) plans in the private sector, in which the employer is a contributor.

Other Benefits

The Washington headquarters location features its own fitness and day-care centers. In addition, GAO's field offices are modern facilities. Some of these facilities have fitness and day-care centers.

Working in GAO

GAO conducts its audits and evaluations by divisions that are grouped by subject matter. A nationwide core of professional staff performs the work of the five divisions. Most of the staff work out of the Washington, D.C., headquarters office and the balance out of offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Huntsville, Los Angeles, Norfolk, San Francisco, and Seattle. The primary focus of each of the divisions is listed below.

Accounting and Information Management Division

Financial Management

- Audit Oversight and Liaison
- Civil Audits
- Consolidated Audit and Computer Security
- Corporate Audits
- Defense Audits

Information Management and Technology

- Defense Information and Financial Management Systems
- General Government Information Systems
- Health, Education, and Human Services Information Systems
- Information Resources Management Policy
- Resources, Community, and Economic Development Information Systems

Budget Issues

General Government Division

- Administration of Justice
- Advanced Studies and Evaluation
Methodology
- Federal Management and Workforce
- Financial Institutions and Markets
- Government Business Operations
- Tax Policy and Administration

Health, Education, and Human Services Division

- Education and Employment
- Health Financing and Systems
- Health Services Quality and Public Health
- Income Security
- Veterans' Affairs and Military Health Care

National Security and International Affairs Division

- Defense Acquisitions
- Defense Management
- International Relations and Trade
- Military Operations and Capabilities
- National Security Analysis
- Special Studies and Evaluations

Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division

This division is responsible for work in the following areas:

- Energy, Resources, and Science
- Environmental Protection
- Food and Agriculture
- Housing and Community Development
- Transportation